

REMARKS

A non-final Office Action was mailed on June 6, 2006. In view of the above amendments and arguments herein, Applicants believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

I. Status of the Claims

Claims 1 - 10, 12 - 14, 23 - 40, and 51 are currently pending, claims 15 - 22 having been earlier withdrawn and claims 11, 41 - 50, and 52 - 60 having earlier been canceled. In the present Amendment, Applicant cancels claims 15 - 22, 36 and 37 without prejudice or disclaimer, amends claims 1, 2, 4 - 10, 12, 23 - 35, and 38 - 40, and adds new claims 61 - 65. No new matter is added. Support for the amendments may be found in the specification, for example, at page 3, lines 8 through page 6, line 9, page 11, line 20 through page 13, line 29 and page 19, line 16 through page 23, line 20.

II. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1 - 7, 12 - 14 and 28 - 34 are rejected under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 as failing to meet the written description requirement. For example, in regard to independent claims 1, 12, 28 and 29 (and, by association, in regard to dependent claims 2 - 7, 13, 14 and 30 - 34), the Examiner finds no support in the specification for claim language characterized by the Examiner as claiming “[commands] including a first question or second question” and “questions which themselves identify an expert.”

Applicant amends claims 1, 12, 28 and 29 to remove all language associating commands with questions, and any language that might be interpreted as suggesting that commands or questions identify experts. Accordingly, Applicant submits that amended independent claims 1, 12, 28 and 29 are allowable under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112. As claims 2 - 7 and 30 - 34 each depend from one of allowable 1, 12, 28 and 29, Applicant further submits that claims 2 - 7, and 30 - 34 are also allowable for at least this reason. Claims 12 - 14 have been amended to depend from

amended independent claim 8, which Applicant submits is allowable for the reasons presented below. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 be withdrawn.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 8 - 10, 35 - 40 and 51 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,039,688 to Douglas et al. (“Douglas”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,880,731 to Liles et al. (“Liles”). Claims 23 - 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over (“Douglas”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,880,731 to Liles et al. (“Liles”) and U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0088461 to Christensen (“Christensen”). Applicant cancels claims 36 and 37 without prejudice or disclaimer, amends claims 8 - 10, 35 and 38 - 40 to better characterize the nature of his invention, and respectfully traverses these rejections.

In amended independent claim 8, Applicant discloses:

8. A method for funding at least one an interactive network site, the at least one interactive network site presenting questions submitted by at least one of a plurality of users to at least one of at least two experts, the questions being submitted via at least one client interface, each client interface being identified to the users as a forum on a predetermined subject matter of the forum, at least one forum presenting the at least two experts as experts on the predetermined subject matter of the forum, the method comprising the steps of:

the server receiving a question submitted by one of the plurality of users via the client interface of the at least one forum;

the server routing the submitted question for presentation to one of the at least two experts;

the server presenting the question to the one expert via one of a plurality of personal expert interfaces, each personal expert interface being uniquely associated with one of the at least two experts and in communication with the server;

the server receiving a first command via the personal expert interface of the one expert, the first command including an instruction for the server to route the question to another one of the at least two experts via a personal expert interface of the other expert; and

a third party providing a payment, the third party being associated with a third party product or service, wherein the payment is directed to fund access to the interactive network site by the one user.

(Emphasis added)

Douglas discloses a computer-based system for therapeutic behavior modification, which enables a patient to report and monitor progress against a therapeutic program, and enables a consulting physician or case advisor to monitor the patient's progress and refine the therapeutic program as required (see, e.g., abstract of Douglas). The system provides a "meeting room" feature, through which patients can participate in a virtual meeting with a trained counselor (see, e.g., Col. 11: 21 through Col. 13: 13 of Douglas). During the virtual meeting, the patients and the counselor are able to converse electronically. The system of Douglas is capable of providing a variety of data to third party health plan payors, including costs associated with patients' access to and use of the system (see, e.g., Col. 19: 26 - 47). By implication and with reference to FIG. 54, the Examiner suggests that Douglas therefore teaches a system that receives funding from third parties. The Examiner however acknowledges that Douglas fails to teach patients and experts exchanging questions and answers, but suggests that these features are taught or suggested by Liles.

Liles discloses an on-line chat room in which avatars are employed to graphically represent the participants participating in the chat room (see, e.g., abstract of Liles). In a chat session involving a well-known personality and host, participants are able to join in as observers and listen to the personality answer questions previously submitted by the participants (see, e.g. Col 1: 39 - 45).

In contrast to the method claimed by amended independent claim 8, Applicant respectfully submits that neither Douglas nor Liles explicitly discloses a system in which users are able to exchange questions and answers with an expert on a predetermined subject matter of the question and answer forum. The counselor of Douglas' meeting room facilitates discussions among patient participants rather than providing answers to participants' questions (see, e.g., Col 11: 50 - 55 of Douglas). While the chat room of Liles provides a forum for "personalities" to answer the questions of chat room participants,

Liles makes no suggestion that the personalities necessarily possess an expertise in a particular subject matter for the forum.

Additionally, and in sharp contrast to the method claimed by amended independent claim 8, neither Douglas nor Liles discloses or suggests a method by which a question initially directed to one expert is then routed by the one expert to another expert, by means of a command issued from a personal expert interface of the one expert. By routing the question to the other expert, users are able to be re-directed to an expert better suited to answer their question, or to receive a supplemental answer or second opinion that enriches the answer provided by the one expert.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that amended independent claim 8 is not made obvious by the combination of Douglas and Liles, and is in condition for allowance. As dependent claims 9, 10, 12 - 14 and 23 - 27 depend either directly or indirectly from allowable claim 8, Applicant submits that dependent claims 9, 10, 12 - 14 and 23 - 27 are also allowable for at least this reason.

In amended independent claim 35, Applicant discloses

35. A method for funding at least one interactive network site hosted by a server, the at least one interactive network site providing answers to questions presented by a plurality of users, the users communicating with the server via a plurality of client interfaces, each of the client interfaces being identified to the users as a forum on a predetermined subject matter of the forum, the forum enabling users to present questions and to view questions and answers relating to the predetermined subject matter of the forum, the method comprising the steps of:

the server generating at least two forums in the at least one interactive network site;

the server sending a question presented by a user accessing a first one of the at least two forums to a first expert via a personal expert interface of the first expert, the personal expert interface of the first expert being a web page unique to the first expert on which the question is displayed;

the server receiving a first response to the question from the first expert, the first response including an answer to the question and a first instruction to post the answer to the question;

the server posting the answer to the question to the first forum accessed by the user to present the question; and in response to the first instruction, further posting the answer to the question, according to the first instruction, to a second one of the at least two forums, at which the question was not presented by the user; and

a third party providing a payment for funding the posting of the response, the third party identified as being associated with at least one of the at least two forums.

(Emphasis added).

In addition to the features of Douglas and Liles referenced in regard to claim 8, the Examiner suggests in his discussion of claim 35 that the combination of Douglas and Liles suggests posting an answer or response in the forum of the meeting room or chat room.

Unlike Applicant's claimed invention, however, neither Douglas nor Liles teach or suggest the elements of Applicants' claimed invention that provide in addition for the posting of an expert answers to a second, different forum in which the answered question was not presented. This feature provides the advantage of enabling experts to participate in multiple forums directed to subject matter for which they have expertise in order to cross-post answers to questions that may be of related interest to participants in the multiple forums.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that amended independent claim 35 is not made obvious by the combination of Douglas and Liles, and is in condition for allowance. As dependent claims 38 - 40 and 51 depend either directly or indirectly from allowable claim 35, Applicant submits that dependent claims 38 - 40 and 51 are also allowable for at least this reason.

IV. New Claims

Applicant adds new claims 61 - 65. As new claims 61 - 65 depend either directly or indirectly from one of allowable claims 8 and 35, Applicant submits that new claims 61 - 65 are also allowable for at least this reason.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

If there are any other issues remaining which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Dated: October 24, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

By

Thomas J. Bean

Registration No.: 44,528
DARBY & DARBY P.C.
P.O. Box 5257
New York, New York 10150-5257
(212) 527-7700
(212) 753-6237 (Fax)
Attorneys/Agents For Applicant